

CULTURAL

A Guide to Understanding Place,

MAPPING

Community and Continuity

Second Edition

JANET PILLAI





Cultural Mapping:

A Guide to Understanding Place,
Community and Continuity

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Cultural Mapping:

A Guide to Understanding Place, Community and Continuity

Second Edition

Janet Pillai



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Foreword

"We must excavate the layers of our city downwards, into its earliest past...and thence we must read them upwards, visualising as we go."¹

"We need to be able to fold and integrate the complex, histories, textures and memories of our urban environments and their populations into the planning process. We need to do some cultural mapping – tracing people's memories and visions and values – before we start the planning."²

Cultural mapping is not a new notion for planners. Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), a founder of urban planning in the early 20th century, understood cities as cultural entities requiring planning processes that probed identity and place. His advice to planners to "map before you plan" also roots mapping as a fundamental assumption in planning for the future of communities.

The past decade has seen renewed interest in cultural mapping, most often in the context of it being a foundation for cultural planning. In *Cultural Planning: A Guide to Understanding Place, Community and Culture*, Janet Pillai and her colleagues have made a significant contribution to the international literature on cultural mapping. The strength of the book is that it roots cultural mapping in a solid conceptual foundation and then connects these ideas and frameworks to practical tools and methodologies.

In my own work in cultural planning and the fuller integration of culture across all facets of local government planning and decision-making, cultural mapping is fundamental. In the North American context, cultural mapping is being increasingly embraced by professional planners as an essential tool in carrying out their work. While there has been a great deal of discussion about more integrated planning frameworks, including the notion of culture as the "fourth pillar" of sustainable development

¹ Hall, P. (1988) *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, p. 142.

² Mercer C. (2010) 'A Global View: The Cultural Turn in Urban Planning' in Baeker, G. (Ed) *Rediscovering the Wealth of Places: A municipal cultural planning handbook for Canadian communities*. St. Thomas, Ontario: Municipal World Inc., p.16.

(alongside social, economic and environmental considerations), the planning tools and assumptions needed to effectively implement and operationalise these ideas have been in short supply. Without solid data and information on cultural resources in communities, it is difficult if not impossible to move these important agendas forward. *Cultural Mapping* documents one of the first steps in this direction in Malaysia.

I was pleased to see the strong attention given to intangible cultural resources or elements in the book. Stories have been called the “DNA of culture” and are integral to both cultural mapping and to the deeper understanding of communities needed to shape meaningful and effective plans. Engaging community members in identifying stories that say something important about what makes their community unique is a powerful way to draw larger numbers of citizens into the cultural planning process. Experience demonstrates that people are more actively engaged and receptive to creating new shared visions of the future if their collective past and present have been portrayed and validated in meaningful ways.

Finally, the book convincingly demonstrates that cultural mapping can be effectively applied at a range of scales, from individual sites, to neighbourhoods or districts, to cities or wider regions.

I congratulate the authors on the achievement represented by this book. I will be incorporating many of the ideas into my own practice.

Greg Baeker, PhD

*Director of Cultural Development
Millier Dickinson Blais Inc.
2013 (1st Edition)*

Dr Greg Baeker is one of Canada’s leading thinkers and practitioners in cultural development, with over 35 years working in senior leadership positions in the cultural sector in Canada. Dr Baeker is the founder of AuthentiCity, a leading consulting practice working in Canada and internationally. In 2010, AuthentiCity merged with Millier Dickinson Blais, Canada’s largest specialised economic development firm to form a new Cultural Development Division. Dr Baeker believes passionately in the central role of culture in city-building and economic development. He has undertaken cultural mapping projects and developed cultural plans for communities of all sizes and in diverse circumstances. Dr Baeker holds a Masters in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto and a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Waterloo. His PhD was the first in Canada to focus on cultural planning and the integration of culture in local and regional planning systems. He is the author of *Rediscovering the Wealth of Places: A Municipal Cultural Planning Handbook for Canadian Communities* that is receiving acclaim across Canada and internationally.

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The writing of the second edition of this book (six years after the first edition in 2013) has proved to be yet another process of learning and unlearning. I would like to thank some very special organisations and institutions: Arts-ED, Think City, Badan Warisan, the Getty Foundation and Hong Kong University, which have supported my passion in the practice of cultural mapping and provided me with platforms for learning and teaching, practice and experimentation.

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This Guide would not have come to be without all of you.

Janet Pillai

October 2019

About the Author

Janet Pillai served as an associate professor at the Department of Performing Arts in Universiti Sains Malaysia until 2014. Pillai is currently an independent consultant and resource person who conducts research, training and programming related to community-engaged projects in partnership or consultation with communities, local agencies, institutions and professionals. Her research interest revolves around the themes of cultural heritage education, community development and cultural mapping.

Pillai has authored four books and numerous articles on arts and culture education as well as sustainability. She also contributes as an expert resource person in organisations such as UNESCO Bangkok, APCIEU Korea, Hong Kong University and GETTY Foundation USA.

She is the founder of Arts-ED, a non-profit organisation (NPO) which specialises in community-based heritage education. The work of Arts-ED is focused on promoting cultural sustainability through cultural mapping, documentation and interpretation, and transmission.

Among its many projects, Arts-ED has conducted several cultural mapping projects in Penang which include: myBalikpulau Mapping Project with children (2009, Arts-ED), Campbell Street Market Cultural Mapping Research Project (2010, Universiti Sains Malaysia and 2016, ThinkCity Penang), Chowrasta Urban Market Survey (2011, Badan Warisan Malaysia and LLA Architects Sdn Bhd), Cultural Mapping Study of Jeti Lama Market, Butterworth, Penang (2016, Think City Penang), Cultural Mapping Study of Pulau Tikus Market (2017, Penang Municipality) and Cultural Mapping Study of Bukit Mertajam Market (2019, Think City Penang).

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Arts-ED	Persatuan Pendidikan Seni Pulau Pinang (Arts in Education)
CAD	Computer Aided Design and Drafting
F&B	Food and Beverage
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Analysis)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

For the purpose of this book, persons who request for a mapping exercise, but are not necessarily involved in the mapping process are referred to as the “client”. The client(s) may be an organisation, community, building owner, government agency etc. Persons or groups who execute the mapping exercise are referred to as the “mapping team” which may consist of professionals and/or community organisations. A mapping team may also engage with key stakeholders or “mapping partners” who cooperate to provide information. The term “stakeholders” refers to anyone who can affect or be affected by any changes to the site. They may include users, resident communities, tenants, businesses, governments, local agencies, visitors, etc.

Introduction

This is a revised and updated second edition of a book by the same title first published in 2013. The seven-year gap since the first edition has given my colleagues and I many opportunities to experiment further with cultural mapping methodology. This new edition shares some of our new learning including the experiences of others who have attempted mapping in the region.

Cultural mapping is a systematic approach of recording and presenting information that provides an integrated picture of the cultural character, significance and workings of a place. It employs specific tools and techniques to identify and document the cultural assets and resources of an area, assess their significance and make recommendations for integrated planning that supports cultural integrity and place ecology.

The goal of this Guide is to provide a primer for lay-persons or professionals who wish to know about cultural mapping, its methodology and its use. The book is useful for community activists, planning professionals, architects, designers and policymakers who are interested in a contextual, participatory and holistic approach to place-making, community building, design, planning or policy-making.

This Guide makes an argument for why we need a more comprehensive and integrated approach to broaden the scope of local planning and development and to enhance liveability and sustainability. It explains how cultural mapping can be integrated as a critical step before planning and provides details on how to prepare for and conduct a cultural mapping exercise. The book also provides several case examples from Hong Kong and Malaysia to illustrate the application of cultural mapping in different planning situations.

In brief, the objectives of this Guide are:

- To put into perspective the significant role of culture and place ecology in planning for sustainable development;
- To demonstrate cultural mapping as a discipline that uses a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach involving experts, community and stakeholders; and

- To demonstrate through case practices how cultural mapping can be used as an interdisciplinary tool in a wide variety of projects involving planning, tourism, conservation and education.

The opening chapter of this Guide provides an anthropological perspective to culture and its emergence, dimensions and manifestations. It underscores the role of culture in placemaking and explains how every place develops its own unique ecology. Chapter 2 critiques the modern planning paradigm and suggests the need for a new perspective that integrates the culture and ecology of a place into the planning paradigm. Chapter 3 provides an overview of cultural mapping as a diagnostic tool and technique to be used at the start of a planning process. This chapter explains various perspectives to mapping, mapping themes and the multifarious uses of mapping data. Chapter 4 outlines mapping procedure; the criteria, processes, tools and techniques involved in cultural mapping, data analysis and synthesis. This is done using a sample cultural mapping exercise conducted on a small site in Penang, Malaysia to illustrate the mapping process and to demonstrate the efficacy of various types of mapping tools. Chapter 5 provides case examples of how cultural mapping has been applied in a variety of micro level projects in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

It is hoped that this Guide is successful in demonstrating how cultural mapping can provide a deep understanding of a place and/or community and how this information can facilitate culturally sensitive and informed decision-making and actions.

Role of Culture in Placemaking and Planning

CHAPTER

1

This chapter looks at the broader concept of culture – the circumstances for its emergence, the elements of culture and the function of culture. The chapter examines the symbiotic relationship between “humans” and their specific “environments”, and how culture arises to support unique and distinctive placemaking and lifestyles. The chapter also briefly outlines the evolution of modern planning, its impact on urban development and some associated problems. The chapter argues the need for a more sustainable and integrated planning model at the local level and makes a case for why culture must be considered in planning and development.

Human Settlements and the Phenomenon of Placemaking

From an anthropological perspective, **human settlements** are the result of reciprocal interaction between people and a particular given environment over time. For human settlements to take root, the interaction between humans and the environment inadvertently involves some form of adaptation, problem-solving and innovation, co-operation and co-creation, whereby inhabitants find innovative ways to coexist with the environment and within the group.

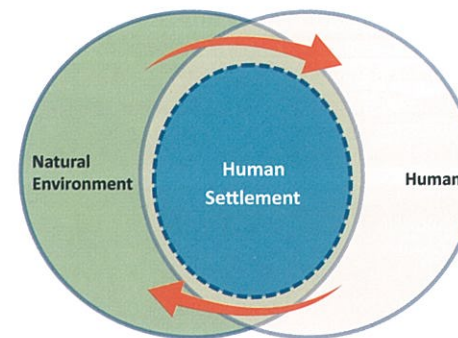
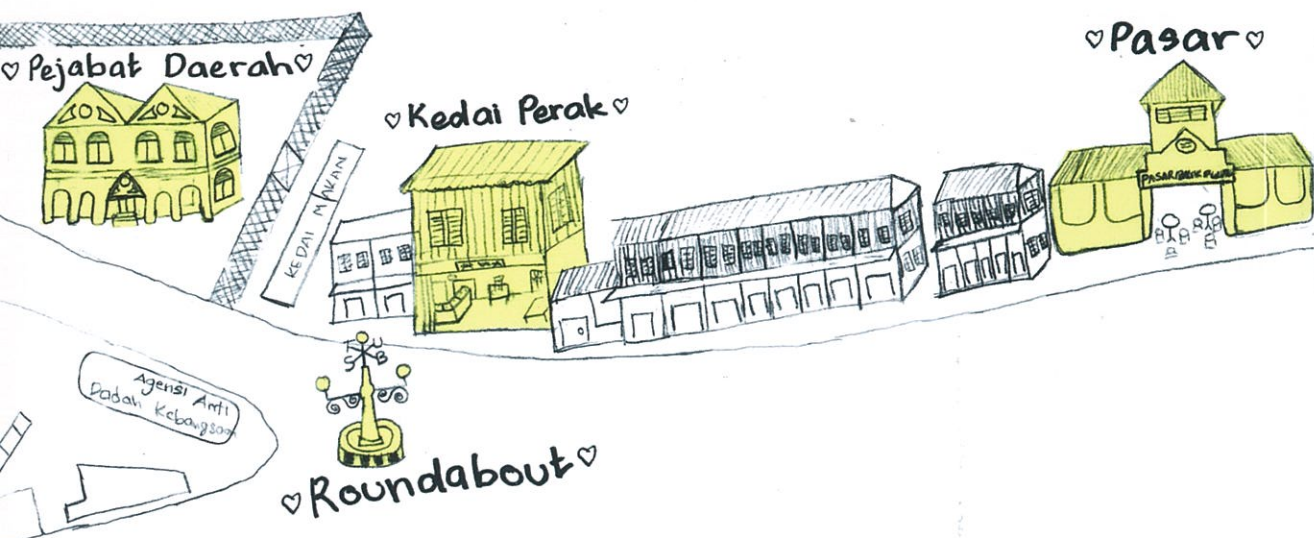


Figure 1: Interaction between humans and the environment

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Cultural mapping is an approach to recording and revealing an integrated picture of cultural character, significance and workings of a place. The second edition of Janet Pillai's book contains everything you need to know about this process, and how to plan and begin your own projects.



"This guide on Cultural Mapping provides an invaluable resource for everyone interested in having a deeper understanding of the unique character and identity of a historic place and its community. It provides the user with a clear methodology for unraveling the complex and significant elements that make up any human settlement. Step-by-step procedures outline the processes, tools and techniques for collecting and assessing the cultural assets and resources of a given community.

"Several illustrated case applications of cultural mapping from Malaysia and Hong Kong have been included to help demonstrate the application of cultural mapping in tourism, conservation, revitalisation and education projects.

"This is a remarkable resource which advocates that cultural mapping should be the basis for all urban planning studies to ensure that culturally sensitive and appropriate decisions are made in the planning, management and development of small and large historic sites and in place-making exercises. A must use for policy makers, planners, cultural advocates and leaders."

Ar. Laurence Loh

*Director of Arkitek LLA Sdn Bhd
and Think City Sdn Bhd*



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♥ Rumah No-100 ♥



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